A Dictionary of Genetic Engineering

by S.G. Oliver and J.M. Ward

Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 1985

153 pages. £12.50, $19.95

One area of molecular biology that is developing very rapidly, and generating a vast amount of jargon, is genetic engineering and it is high time that a book devoted to the terminology commonly used is published. This service has been performed by Oliver and Ward.

The book describes over 500 commonly used terms in genetic engineering in a simple, concise fashion designed to aid those least versant with the subject, but it should also be helpful as a memory aid to those more expert in the field. The definition of some terms is helped by the use of clear illustrations. These could be extended further but would, of course, considerably increase the length of the book. The range of definitions includes equipment such as 'power pack' and 'ultracentrifuge' and more complex terms like 'replacement vectors' and 'cosmids'.

The text includes excellent cross-referencing of terms which not only helps emphasise that, within genetic engineering and molecular biology, no term can be considered in isolation but also saves on space and makes the book much more concise, an essential for a book of this type. Commonly used abbreviations are also incorporated in the cross-referencing.

The dictionary also includes six appendices of useful information. These comprise a list of restriction enzymes and their recognition sites; restriction maps of pBR322, M13mp8, M13mp10 and bacteriophage λ; genetic nomenclature of *Escherichia coli* and *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*; genetic maps of *E. coli, Bacillus subtilis* and *S. cerevisiae*; the genetic code (and variations found in codon usage by different organisms) and the one- and three-letter abbreviations for amino acids. This type of information is important if the dictionary is to be seen as a reference work for use by undergraduates, postgraduates and more experienced workers, both within the field and those attempting to understand the jargon.

This book is an excellent attempt to simplify the jargon and terminology involved in genetic engineering and should open the field to a large number of interested scientific workers. It should be especially useful to undergraduates and postgraduates new to genetic engineering and its terminology. Hopefully the authors will be prepared to revise and update this edition in time as the field of genetic engineering expands.

P.A. Boyd

Gene Expression in Brain

Edited by C. Zomzely-Neurath and W.A. Walker

John Wiley & Sons; New York, 1985

300 pages. £49.15

The dissection of the molecular biology of the mammalian brain is an immensely daunting as well as challenging prospect. The brain is a unique organ on account of its extensive cell-type heterogeneity and the pronounced physical, chemical and electrical specializations exhibited by